

MICHELLE PFEIFFER is on the warpath — all because somebody called her perfect.

The actress many believe is the most beautiful in Hollywood is sick of being attacked over her looks.

The latest trouble flared when American Esquire magazine ran a picture of Michelle with the cover line: "What Michelle Pfeiffer needs... is absolutely nothing."

But what was meant to be the

After years establishing her credibility and months of hard work in Russia

# MICHELLE SEES RED!

ultimate compliment has blown up, unfortunately, in Michelle's face.

Harper's magazine in its next issue announced plans to publish the Esquire photo retoucher's bill for the Pfeiffer job — \$1525 to "clean up complexion, soften smile line, trim chin, soften neck muscle a bit".

Explaining the expose, Harper's editor Lewis Lapham says: "Women are constantly faced with perfection in magazines. This is to remind the reader in an amusing

way there's a difference between life and art."

Michelle doesn't see it that way and is livid at being caught in a sniping match between the two mass-circulation magazines.

Confronted with the latest attack on her beauty, she throws up her hands and tells TV WEEK: "Is this the degree to which they have to go to pick on me?"

"I don't know what to think of it any more. The debate on my looks by the Press has become really boring and it is something that is out of my control so I'm not going to worry about it any more."

Although Michelle hates publicity and fame — she refused to do most interviews set up to promote her current movie *The Russia House*, leaving her co-star Sean Connery to carry the brunt of it — she is forced into the limelight.

At 32, Michelle quickly rose above "playing bimbo TV airheads", as she terms her earlier work, to be one of the top actresses in Hollywood, demanding \$1 million a movie.

Nominated for an Oscar for *Dangerous*

*Liaisons*, she starred in *Married To The Mob*, with Matthew Modine, and *Tequila Sunrise*, with Mel Gibson, before securing her place on Hollywood's "A" list of actresses with a second Oscar nomination for *The Fabulous Baker Boys*.

Although described by *Tequila Sunrise* director Robert Towne as "the most difficult actress I've ever worked with", Michelle also has her fans.

Connery rejects Michelle's reputation for being difficult, saying he had casting approval and was impressed with her.

"Michelle is an absolute professional," Connery says. "She was so obviously a marvellous choice and she learned Russian so well she was talking to these Russian kids with a flawless accent in some scenes."

Michelle admits to early runs with the Australian director of *The Russia House*, Fred Schepisi, but it was all in the name of doing her job well.

"Fred kept directing me to be softer and more demure and I kept fighting it," she admits. "Finally I had been in Russia long enough to witness Russian women and I told him I was sorry. He was right and we did it his way."

"On one hand, they (Russian women) have this incredible naivety, but on the other hand they have this wisdom and depth."

"I was talking to a beautiful Russian woman who was telling me about this horrible thing that happened to her earlier in her life. It was

● Michelle Pfeiffer and Sean Connery on location in Leningrad for *The Russia House*.







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really devastating what she was telling me, and she told me the whole story with a poker face that showed no sign of emotions.

"Then, all of a sudden, one single tear fell down her face while she was telling me this story.

"That's what is so extraordinary about Russian women that is so difficult to capture on film — even their emotions become economical.

"There are certain things about playing a Russian woman that just don't compute with my own reality and it's difficult for me as an

American to get under the skin of a character who is so far from my experience. Katya (her character) is strong, intelligent and brave. She lives where she speaks."

In *The Russia House*, based on the book by John Le Carre and adapted into a screenplay by Tom Stoppard, Connery plays a derelict British publisher, Barley Blair.

At a writers' dinner party in the Russian countryside, Barley meets a Soviet scientist and casually offers to help publish manuscripts if he ever finds the courage to send them

to the outside world. Barley's remarks set off a string of events beginning when Katya, a Soviet, delivers a manuscript to Barley which, if published, could dramatically alter the global balance of power.

When the American and British intelligence agencies force Barley to get involved in espionage to decide how accurate the manuscript is, he falls in love with Katya and has to make a decision which could change history.

As Katya, Michelle had to perfect a Russian accent and change her American accent when speaking English.

"It was my first work with an accent so I was not only concentrating on thinking Russian, but I was also thinking English, too, as I couldn't let it sound like English was my first language," she says.

Michelle says that filming in Russia for several months gave her a new appreciation for her American lifestyle.

"Everyone wanted to have a nervous breakdown after six days," she says. "It is things you take for granted — getting from Point A to Point B — that become impossible. If you don't have a pack of cigarettes, you may not be able to get home at night!

"Everything is so bureaucratic — even the jazz club in Leningrad where I went, thinking I'd finally see everybody let loose. You had to go to one section to buy your drink; another to drink it; you couldn't bring your coat in even if you wanted to."

Although Pfeiffer appears cool and unruffled, she admits — with a bit of nudging — that she was initially intimidated to be working with Connery.

"I have always liked Sean's work but I was nervous when we first met," she says. "He walked in to the room and he has a presence about him that I found really intimidating. But he quickly disarmed the situation and we had a great working relationship."

*From Jenny Cooney  
in Los Angeles*